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Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
Wednesday, February 16, 2022

H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023

Good evening, my name is Amanda Carrington and I am the Assistant Director at the YWCA New Britain Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS). We provide free and confidential services for survivors of sexual violence and their loved ones.

I am writing in strong support of the provision in the Governor's proposal in H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 to enhance funding for victim service providers.

This funding provision is a direct result of the devastating loss of Victim of Crimes Act Funds (VOCA) that aid our work supporting victims of sexual violence. VOCA funding, generated from federal criminal fines and fees, is at an all-time low due to an issue that redirected those fines and fees to the General Treasury for the past few years. In July, President Biden signed into law a measure that will correct this problem, and national experts expect the VOCA Fund should replenish in approximately two years. It is anticipated the two-year loss of funds will create a 50% cut to victim services for Connecticut.

As a non-profit program, we never require our clients to pay for services. The majority of our clients are low-income individuals who rely on free mental health and crisis intervention resources. Federal VOCA funding provides the majority of our program budget. Without this continued support, we could not offer any of these services.

Our program supports survivors from 46 towns within Hartford County, and parts of Tolland County. Services include two 24/7 crisis hotlines (English and Spanish), short term counseling, prevention education, support groups, and accompaniments (for medical forensic exams, police reports, and court hearings). I have worked at SACS in different capacities for the past six years. I know first-hand how lifechanging receiving services can be. Many clients do not have the financial ability to maintain private clinical and legal services. As a result, they rely wholly on us during their healing journey.

The loss of these funds will cause irrevocable harm to Connecticut survivors. Supporting this bill will maintain our position as a national leader for survivor's rights and legislation. I urge you to support the Governor's use of ARPA funds to ensure that the loss of VOCA funds does not harm the often-silent victims in our state.

Thank you very much for your service to victims of crime, and victims of sexual violence, in Connecticut.

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